

Zen Lawyer

CHAPTER 10



“I caddied for the Dalai Lama once. He didn’t give me a tip for my effort,” Bill Murray says in *Caddy Shack*. “But he did grant me total consciousness on my death bed, so I’ve got that going for me.”

Buddha himself allegedly told his students the following Zen story, “Watch Yourself.” Once there was a pair of acrobats. The teacher was a poor widower and the student was a young girl named Meda. These acrobats performed each day on the streets in order to earn enough to eat.

Their act consisted of the teacher balancing a tall bamboo pole on his head while the little girl climbed slowly to the top. Once at the top, she remained there while the teacher walked along the ground. Both performers had to maintain complete focus and balance in order to prevent injury and to complete the performance.

One day, the teacher said to the pupil, “Meda, I will watch you and you watch me, so that we can help each other maintain concentration and balance and prevent an accident. Then we’ll surely earn enough to eat.”

But the little girl was wise, she answered, “Master, I think it would be better for each of us to watch ourselves. To look after oneself means to look after both of us. That way I am sure we will avoid any accidents and earn enough to eat.”

Looking after oneself, through the Zen lens, does not mean buying a Porsche Boxster or a Prada bag, but rather nourishing your mind and body. Mindfulness is a way to do this.

When you look after yourself, you will treat those around you with more compassion, kindness and love. At least that’s the theory. The flip side, by the way, is also true – you will benefit from treating others well.

You may have noticed some lawyers become horribly wound up in the practice of law. Not you, of course, but perhaps the ambient tension still vexes you?

Meditation helps.

But how do you meditate when there is so much else to do -- work, family, friends, miscellaneous mischief? According to my informal poll, lack of time is the number one reason lawyers who want to be more mindful do not meditate.

What if you could meditate in just one minute?

Try this: set a one-minute timer on your phone, sit comfortably, place hands together, close eyes, breath in through nose for eight beats, breath out for eight, focus exclusively on breathing. When distracting thoughts float into your head – as they will – focus back on breathing. Continue until the timer sounds.

Given our demanding schedules and the endless noise of the profession, many lawyers I have shared this with find it useful. If you do this regularly, it will quiet your mind, improve your mood, and more.

Bill Murray says we do everything better when we are relaxed and Bill Murray is a genius. I’ve found the one-minute meditation most helpful when I’m switching from one mode to another. For example, say you just finished picking a jury or arguing a motion and now you have to get your head clear for opening statement.

Meditating between activities will help you be fully present in whatever you are doing.



As a Zen Lawyer, do not wait for the Dalai Lama to grant you total consciousness on your death bed. Begin meditating.

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